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German Literature," wird sehr richtig dargestellt, z. B. die *Whitman mania* als *an isolated and abnormal instance of German interest in an American poet* abgetan, aber der Schlussabsatz endet recht töricht, nachdem gesagt wurde, es hätten die deutsche und amerikanische Literatur um 1850 aufgehört einander zu beeinflussen und *Germany about the same time began to regard the realm of the air as unworthy of her powers and turned her attention to the dominion of the earth*. Man denke, als der poetische Realismus eben einsetzte und alle die grossen Dramen, Romane und Novellen des 19. Jahrhunderts geschaffen wurden!

F. SCHOENEMANN.

Kiel.

Étude sur le Lancelot en prose, par FERDINAND LOT. Bibliothèque de l'École des Hautes Études, No. 226. Paris, Champion, 1918. 452 pp.

The discovery of the previous generation of mediæval scholars was that mediæval writers were conservative. In the twelfth century a story-teller still departed from the traditional version at his peril. This conservatism accounts for a host of survivals in twelfth- and thirteenth-century texts that interest the anthropologist and the historian of primitive religion. It was these vestiges of an earlier and more picturesque world that appealed to the romantics who, in the nineteenth century, discovered the Middle Ages. It was these fossils of a far earlier time that interested Gaston Paris and still interest most of his pupils in twelfth-century French literature.

The discovery of the present generation of Arthurian students is that writers of mediæval romance were progressive. To the scholar who succeeded Gaston Paris in the Collège de France, anthropology, mythology, folk-lore, even comparative literature, were distinctly uncongenial, if not actually repugnant. M. Bédier, even in his first work, *Les Fabliaux*, shows clearly his impatience of studies which, exhausting themselves in discovering the history of the transmission of a given twelfth-century story, leave out of account everything that the twelfth century contributed to it. To M. Bédier the materials which the author used were of no more interest than the

quarries from which the stone was drawn for Rheims Cathedral. He proceeded, therefore, in his following work to turn his back upon the search for sources and to devote himself to studying the literature of the twelfth century as the expression of the ideas of twelfth-century men.

Other scholars, chiefly French, have followed his example. The Tristan romance, the *chansons de geste* and the *Roman de Renard* have thus been given their rightful place in the history of French literature. M. Lot's study of the *Lancelot-Graal* now adds another important genre to those already reclaimed for literature. A typical French prose romance, hitherto regarded as a conglomerate more or less accidentally brought into its present form, is here studied for the first time as the reflection of a thirteenth-century idea rather than as a collection of fossils.

The *Lancelot-Graal* is a biography of Lancelot, including the story of the Holy Grail brought to the island of Britain by Lancelot's ancestor and revealed at last to Lancelot's son,—a biography ending with the tragic story of the destruction of the Table Round, the consequence of Lancelot's sin with Arthur's queen.

The *Lancelot-Graal* was not the first romance to present in sequence the history of the Grail, the story of an Arthurian Grail hero, the treason of Modred, and the tale of Arthur's death. A prose trilogy on this subject already existed, the *Joseph-Merlin-Perceval* (including a *Mort d'Arthur*) associated with the name of Robert de Boron.¹ A French poem, which Ulrich von Zatzikhoven translated, had given a biography of Lancelot; Chrestien de Troyes had elevated him to the position of the Queen's chosen lover, availing himself for that purpose of a tradition about the abduction of Guinevere, and borrowing hints for its treatment from a similar incident in the Tristan story; Robert de Boron, and possibly Wauchier, had given a Christian coloring to Chrestien's Grail story; and in the wealth of incident about Tristan, Gawain, Perceval, and other knights current in French romance and Latin chronicle, a mine of material lay ready at hand. To introduce all this into the framework of the *Joseph-Merlin-Perceval* trilogy did not require a striking degree of originality. What is, however, striking and

¹ Cf. Lot, p. 133, 188. Critics are not agreed as to the authorship, date, or sources of the *Perceval*.

original in the *Lancelot-Graal*, is that here Lancelot becomes for the first time the central figure in the Arthurian story and, through Galahad his son, of the Grail Quest as well. Perceval and Arthur are reduced to a subordinate position. The whole cycle is thus given a new unity and a new significance.²

M. Lot does not in the least contend that the *Lancelot-Graal* is the creation of an individual author in the same sense as *David Copperfield* or *Clarissa Harlowe* or even as *King Lear* or *Winter's Tale*. He recognizes clearly that the parts are still to be regarded as *remaniements*, however thorough and extensive, of earlier texts. He is interested in determining the purposes and method of the *remaniement*.³ The two chapters entitled *Sources et élaboration de l'œuvre* are among the most illuminating passages in the history of the criticism of mediæval French literature.

It is in the *Quête* that the *Lancelot-Graal* has operated the most profound changes in the story. To retell it for the edification of the orthodox involved a host of difficulties: How could a Christian interpretation be given to the Lance? the Cup? the Sword? the Maimed King? the Fisher King? the Perilous Seat? To oust Perceval and to give the glory of the winning of the Grail to a son of Lancelot was an undertaking that bristled with dilemmas: How could the conception of Galahad take place in so sacred a spot as the Castle of Corbenic? But how could it take place anywhere else if he was to be the grandson of the Grail King? How could he be born there without destroying the mystery and the difficulty of the Quest? But how could the daughter of the Grail King, without an undue amount of unseemly adventure, bear him anywhere else to an errant knight unwilling to espouse her? How could the perfect knight be a child born out of wedlock? But how could he be other than illegitimate if Lancelot was to keep his faith to Guinevere?

A careful study of the contradictions and ambiguities of the *Lancelot-Graal* shows them to be due for the most part to the effort to Christianize the motifs furnished by its sources. This effort "involved the author in dilemmas from which he succeeded in

² Cf. esp. pp. 168-71, 183, 190-1, 193, 203, 205, 249, 261, 289-91.

³ Pp. 205, 213, 215, 260.

extricating himself only with the greatest difficulty, at the price of perpetual artifices, sometimes clumsy and sometimes subtle.”⁴

“Author” is the word M. Lot uses, not “redactor” or “compiler” or “interpolator.” He states the thesis of his study in his first chapter as follows:

“Le corpus *Lancelot-Graal* [*i. e.* the seven volumes in Sommer’s series], déduction faite du *Merlin* et de ses suites [*i. e.* Sommer’s volumes 2 and 7], qui sont certainement postiches, est dû à un seul auteur. Il présente sous une diversité apparente une unité de conception et de plan certaine. Ce n’est pas l’œuvre romanesque et mystique la plus parfaite du moyen-âge français, mais c’en est, à coup sûr, la plus puissante.”⁵

To establish the fact that the *Lancelot-Graal* is the production of a single author, M. Lot shows that the Lancelot biography, composed with the shrewd attempt to pass as history, carries the chronological thread through a labyrinth of adventures with a tenacity which can be attributed only to the conscious design of an artist. He devotes two chapters to showing that the concatenation of pressage and retrospect is scrupulously preserved in the cycle as a whole, giving it complete unity of plan. He shows that the episodes are interwoven and dovetailed in such a way that if one is stricken out the whole series is disturbed. He shows that the sources used are the same throughout the cycle.⁶

⁴ P. 260.

⁵ Pp. 7-8.

⁶ The view of Prof. J. D. Bruce who recently published an extensive study on the composition of the *Lancelot* in the *Romanic Review*, may be summarized as follows: “The *Lancelot* was composed as a separate work, without any thought of the Grail, but later became contaminated with the Grail story. The *Quête* was also originally written as a separate work, the author wishing to replace Perceval by a more ascetic hero. The *Mort Artu* was next composed; then the *Estoire* to supply an early history of the Grail which should accord with the *Quête*. Lastly the *Merlin* was written. There was no concert among the men who wrote these romances. They came into existence in the same way as the *chansons de geste* of the Guillaume d’Orange cycle or the Old Greek cyclic epics about Troy. Finally, however, recognizing the cyclic character of these romances, inspired, perhaps, by the cyclic plan which Robert de Boron, at least, partially executed, *assembleurs* brought them together in single manuscripts or series of manuscripts, and made some interpolations, but not a great many, some of which were designed to fit them more closely to one another.” The summary here quoted is an extract from a personal letter.

Cf. *Rom. Review*, ix (1918), 243 ff., x (1919), 377-88.

What Prof. Bruce credits to this series of *assembleurs* M. Lot credits to

Further investigation may modify M. Lot's conclusion to the extent of distinguishing the work of more than one hand in the *Lancelot-Graal*, but his book has demonstrated that the *Estoire*, the *Lancelot*, the *Quête* and the *Mort Artu* are parts of a conscious and unified artistic design.

Previous critics have been fortified in the hypothesis of multiple authorship by the contrast between the gross sensuality of certain passages in the *Lancelot* and the intense asceticism permeating the *Quête*. How far an antinomy of this sort is compatible with single authorship is a question which critics will answer differently according to their different observation of life. To the present reviewer this inconsistency seems characteristic of a number of mediæval authors. Asceticism and mysticism have been in all ages the refuge of ardent souls tormented by sensuality. Colder natures can better preserve a middle path. The fact that in some parts the *Lancelot-Graal* is under the influence of Wauchier, in whom the same dual spirit is manifest, should also be taken into account. Another argument advanced in behalf of multiple authorship is the length of the romance. But even if the *Lancelot-Graal* were as original a work as a modern novel, it would be entirely within the limits of one man's powers. Otherwise *Le Grand Cyrus* and the *Rougon-Macquart* and the *Waverley* novels are prodigies.

M. Lot sets the composition of the work between 1214 and 1227, and limits the *Estoire* even more narrowly to the years 1221-5. He believes the author to have belonged to the secular clergy and to have been attached as chaplain to the court of some feudal lord, a count of Champagne or Flanders. The *terminus ad quem* seems to the present reviewer very imperfectly established. M. Lot puts it at 1227 from the fact that Manessier seems to have been acquainted with the *Lancelot-Graal* and that Manessier says he wrote at the request of "Jeanne la comtesse qu'est de Flandres dame et maitresse." But as M. Lot himself recognizes in a footnote the fact that, her husband having been released from prison, Jeanne ceased, in 1227, to be *sole* mistress of Flanders, does not make that

a single *assembleur* and calls him author. The difference between the two points of view is the difference between the tendency to minimize the originality and unity of the *remaniement* and the tendency to emphasize it. In view of the overwhelming body of new evidence presented by M. Lot, the burden of proof must rest on those who refuse to accept his conclusions.

date a necessary *terminus ad quem*. She may well have been alluded to as "de Flandres dame et maitresse" as late as 1244. The later date would fit better into the development of French fiction as at present conceived.⁷

To signalize all that is new and important in M. Lot's book is impossible within the limits of the present review. The chapter on *Les Destinés de l'Œuvre*, of the utmost importance for the history of the French prose romances, must pass with bare mention. Likewise the two charming literary essays by Mme. Lot-Borodine. It is regrettable that the book has no index. The selection of illustrations from fifteenth-century manuscripts is difficult to account for. Thirteenth-century illustrations such as those reproduced from the Yates-Thompson manuscripts would far better represent the thirteenth-century romance.

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L'Influence des Lakistes sur les Romantiques Français. Par AUSTIN SMITH, B. A. et M. A. Université de Wisconsin, Lecteur américain à la Sorbonne 1918-1920. Paris, Jouve & Co., 1920. 361 pp.

Il faut savoir gré à M. Austin Smith d'avoir rassemblé dans son travail, présenté en Sorbonne comme thèse de doctorat d'université, des détails non sans intérêt sur le culte voué aux Lakistes par une petite "chapelle" d'écrivains romantiques. On y trouvera une étude consciencieuse et nouvelle sur Amédée Pichot, dont le *Voyage historique et littéraire en Angleterre et en Ecosse* (1825) a révélé à un petit groupe de fidèles certaines tendances des poètes lakistes et surtout de Wordsworth. On y verra comment Sainte-Beuve a non seulement imité de très près les Lakistes, mais s'est efforcé toute sa vie de convertir ses contemporains à une conception d'ailleurs singulièrement rétrécie des théories lakistes dont il s'était constitué l'apôtre. On y lira enfin des pages intéressantes et fines sur Bri-

⁷ To place the *terminus ad quem* at 1236 (cf. Lot, p. 135) would obviate one of Prof. Bruce's two chief objections to M. Lot's hypothesis. Cf. *Rom. Rev.*, x (1919), 378-9.